

critical digest

Vol. III No. 17

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The Weekly Newsletter Digest of the Current New York Theatre Scene

New York Openings This Week

Twentieth Century-ANTA Playhouse, 12/24/50. Third ANTA subscriptions play featuring Jose Ferrer and Gloria Swanson in revival of Ben Hecht-Charles MacArthur comedy...King Lear-National, 12/25/50. Robert Joseph and Alexander Cohen present Louis Calhern, Arnold Moss, Edith Atwater and Nina Foch in Shakespeare's tragedy...Captain Brassbound's Conversion-City Center, 12/27/50. First of three play schedule of N.Y. City Theatre Company features Edna Best and John Archer in the Shaw play...An Enemy of the People-Broadhurst, 12/28/50. Arthur Miller's adaptation of Ibsen's play stars Fredric March and Florence Eldridge. Produced by Lars Nordenson.

Digests of Current Reviews -- more on back page

Out of This World-Century, 12/21/50. Subber and Ayers production of Cole Porter's musical version Amphitryon was saluted by all but four daily reviewers. Sets by Lemuel Ayers copped top honors, with Agnes de Mille's dance numbers running a close second. All welcomed Charlotte Greenwood back to the theatre after a 23 year absence. Supporting cast headed by David Burns, William Eythe, Priscilla Jillette, Barbara Ashley and George Jongeyans shared adjectives. Criticism of Porter's score ranged from "Tops" to "sub-standard". Dissenters included critics of Times, News and Brooklyn Eagle. Barnes, Herald Tribune, filed "so-so" report. Atkinson, Times, thought the dull book by Taylor and Lawrence succeeded in making sex sound tiresome. Sheaffer, Eagle, placed the blame on abundance of tired plot. Several reported audience's exuberance stopped show several times. Duke and Duchess of Windsor were center of attraction among first nighters.

The Cellar and the Well-ANTA Playhouse, 12/10/50. Four more "con" reviews filed by weekly reviewers against ANTA's production of Phillip Pruneau's play. Trade paper critics agreed with daily reviewers that presentation offered no credit to author, cast or ANTA. Marshall, Nation, saw it as proof that realism of the liberal sort is dead. Gabriel, Cue, believed that Chicago's South Side had never been so maligned. Variety critic was interested in double use experiment of the theatre.

Let's Make An Opera-Golden, 12/13/50-12/16/50. Audience participation musical sponsored by Peter Lawrence and Show of the Month Club closed after five performances. Only one of the weekly reviewers found it charming, the rest thought New Yorkers were not prone to sing readily in public. Marshall, Nation, was sorry to hear it folded so fast. She believed it would have been successful once it overcomes the initial sight unseen resistance, or if it had been moved to a family theatre like the City Center. Gibbs, New Yorker, is convinced that only drunks and determined comedians would actually sing in public. Gabriel, Cue, and Hobe, Variety, both found the opera itself charming but felt it took too long to arrive.

Editorial Pros & Cons

As the New Year nears, the editor wishes to express his thanks and appreciation to subscribers and friends. All suggestions, criticisms (pro and con) and brickbats have been thoughtfully considered. New features will be introduced in forthcoming issues. The aim of this weekly newsletter digest will continue to be to keep the reader fully informed of the current New York theatre scene as it is recorded in newspapers, magazines, radio and television. Please write or call for any information or service.

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' A Key to NYC Criticism At A Glance '
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Shows are rated as to how the critics liked them, not if they think they will hit. "So-So" means the critic did not state directly if he recommended the show for an entertaining or stimulating evening.

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| 1. NY Times | 11. Newark News | 21. Catholic World |
| 2. NY Herald Tribune | 12. Women's Wear Daily | 22. Commonweal |
| 3. NY News | 13. Daily Worker | 23. Cue |
| 4. NY Mirror | 14. Wall Street Journal | 24. Chr.Sci.Monitor |
| 5. NY Compass | 15. Journal of Commerce | 25. Sat.Review Lit |
| 6. NY Post | 16. George Jean Nathan | 26. Newsweek |
| 7. Ward Morehouse (WT&S, N.Y.Sun) | 17. Morning Telegraph | 27. Time |
| 8. NY Journal American | 18. Variety | 28. Nation |
| 9. World Telegram & Sun | 19. Billboard | 29. New Republic |
| 10. Brooklyn Eagle | 20. Theatre Arts | 30. New Yorker |

Affairs of State-Music Box, 9/25/50. Pro: 2-3-4-5-8-9-15-18-19-27-30. Con: 1 votes. None: 13-17-21-23-28.

Arms and the Man-Arena, 10/26/50. Pro: 4-10-11-12-18-19-23-29. Con: 12 votes.

Bell, Book and Candle-Barrymore, 11/14/50. Pro: 19 votes. Con: 2-6-7-18-22.

Black Chiffon-48th St.Theatre, 9/27/50. Pro: 20 votes. Con: 2-3-14-22-27-29.

Call Me Madam-Imperial, 10/12/50. Pro: 22 votes. Con: 19-20-28-29. So-So: 3.

The Cocktail Party-Miller, 1/2/50. Pro: 21 votes. Con: 1-9-13-14-22-25-29. So-So: 16-30.

The Country Girl-Lyceum, 11/10/50. Pro: 19 votes. Con: 4-9-16-27-28-30.

Gentlemen Prefer Blondes-Ziegfeld, 12/8/49. Pro: 21 votes. Con: 16-19-22-23-29. So-So: 16-19-22-23-27.

Guys and Dolls-46th St.Theatre, 11/24/50. Pro: 23 votes. Con: 28.

The Happy Time-Plymouth, 1/24/50. Pro: 21 votes. Con: 5-6-7-20-26-27-28-30.

Hilda Crane-Coronet, 11/1/50. Pro: 13 votes. Con: 1-2-5-14-16-19-23-27-28-29-30.

Kiss Me Kate-Shubert, 12/31/48. Pro: 28 votes. Con: 29.

The Lady's Not For Burning-Royale, 11/8/50. Pro: 20 votes. Con: 3-5-12-29. So-So: 18-30.

The Member of the Wedding-Empire, 1/5/50. Pro: 26 votes. Con: 16. So-So: 2-27-30

Mister Roberts-Alvin, 2/13/48. Pro: 24 votes. Con: 21-24. So-So: 13-16-17.

Pardon Our French-Broadway, 10/5/50. Pro: 10-11-12-15-18. Con: 14 votes. So-So: 1-5-8-9.

Peep Show-Winter Garden, 6/28/50. Pro: 11 votes. Con: 1-2-12-16-20-26-27-28-29-30. So-So: 3-14-18.

Peter Pan-St. James, 4/24/50. Pro: 21 votes. Con: 8-13-16-30. So-So: 6-14-19.

The Relapse-Morosco, 11/22/50. Pro: 2-3-6-8-9-10-12-16. Con: 1-4-7.

Season in the Sun-Cort, 9/28/50. Pro: 20 votes. Con: 10-12-24-28. So-So: 11.

Ring Round the Moon-Martin Beck, 11/23/50. Pro: 12 votes. Con: 3-8-9-15-22-23-27. So-So: 1-2.

South Pacific-Majestic, 4/8/49. Pro: 19 votes. Con: 27. So-So: 23.

The Tower Beyond Tragedy-Biltmore, 11/26/50. Pro: 1-3-9-11-12-14-18-19-23-39. Con: 2-4-5-6-8-10-27.

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' Green Room Department '
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COMPARING PLAYGOERS...American audiences are never very enthusiastic, Tyrone Power informed British Equity meeting, Stage reports. English people seem to go to the theatre as a normal part of their lives because they love the people of the theatre and love being in a theatre. Though London audiences are not so demonstrative during the play, the curtain calls are something to be remembered.

NO BUSINESS LIKE...ANTA backed "Showtime-USA" is neither advancing the theatre nor television in any particular direction, comments Crosby, Herald Tribune. Radio and TV critic fears that the potential playgoer could hardly avoid asking himself why he should pay \$4.80 to see the kind of plays shown on the program, when he gets better ones from on "Studio One".

FEAR GBS...British press and radio are just as afraid of the deceased George Bernard Shaw, as they were of the live version. Purdom, Theatre News Letter, survey of obits proved that Shaw's theories were treated with kid gloves. Almost as if they feared the Bard of Ayot Saint Lawrence would return to debate with them.

SUGGESTED AWARD...Watts, Post, suggests the N.Y. Drama Critics Circle bestow an award on Paul Hume, Washington Post, for giving the profession of critic dignity in a difficult moment and a popularity it rarely possesses.

SAVE ANTA BRICKBATS...Critics, amateur and professional, who find fault with every move ANTA makes are hindering ANTA's progress more than they realize, notes Theatre News Weekly. The brickbats should be saved until it is clearly demonstrated that the overall objective is being forgotten. Now efforts should be made to aid the fund raising campaign.

HAIL PRESS AGENTS...Ode of appreciation to the independent press agent was penned by Sylvester, News, on first anniversary of Publicists Guild. The hucksters, who think up the bright sayings which appear in the columns to plug their clients, were wished continued success with their new union.

JEWELRY AUCTION...Helen Hayes gift of a \$5000 brooch to be auctioned off at the ANTA ball was applauded by Wright, Mirror. The money will be used to pay off the mortgage on the ANTA playhouse. She invited Gary Cooper, Clark Gable and John Wayne to contribute tiepins to the cause.

PROMOTION PLANS...Definite plans of Council of the Living Theatre were detailed by promotion director Gerald Goode to Rice, Post. January 10 NBC program over 142 stations will feature many of the stage great. Essay contest for High School students will run from February to June. Society of New York Designers will hold fashion show in May inspired by stage fashions.

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' Theatre News Round Up '
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Shows that closed include Let's Make An Opera and The Tower Beyond Tragedy... Letter show's scheduled commercial run cancelled because Author Robinson Jeffers couldn't make the required changes in time...Columbia University summer session will feature theatre course which will include admissions to the current Broadway hits... Outer Circle heard Helen Hayes and Bethel Lewis, Drama Desk guested principals of Guys and Dolls...Museum of City of New York showing "Some Wonderful Moments in the N.Y. Theatre"...American Educational Theatre Association mid-century performances for night club talent...Hilda Crane promoted via five minute kinescope film on TV stations...Abe Burrows gives theatre reviews on CBS "Hear It Now"...George Jean Nathan wants to buy Sinclair Lewis' Massachusetts estate...Four national magazines are doing articles on Vivian Blaine.

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' Interview Hi-Lights '
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JUDITH ANDERSON...The Tower Beyond Tragedy star has her immediate and long range plans laid, Hawkins, WT&S, discovered. She would love to do L'Aiglon, St. Joa. The Cherry Orchard and the two Jeffers play in terms of a five year repertory on an international tour.

SAM LEVENE...Guys and Dolls actor knows he is type cast, but can do little about it, he told Tex and Jinx, Herald Tribune. Hollywood tried to persuade him to Anglicize his last name, which comes from the Russian Levinne. Some day he wishes to play a middle aged Shylock.

JOHN HOUSEMAN...King Lear director thinks this is the proper time to accept Shakespeare's play he explained to Rice, Post. The author wrote the play when he was growing deeply concerned with human values, the weaknesses and the noble good of man. Though recent generations were convinced they lived in the best of possible worlds, today even the basest idiot is aware that all is not right.

GALVINA TALVA...Call Me Madam actress would like to remain with the hit for about a year, she admitted to Morehouse, WT&S. Then a dramatic career. Singing lessons and a literature course at Columbia are on the schedule for next semester. The beauty has no plans of marriage to anyone or anything but the theatre at present.

ROBERT LEWIS...An Enemy of the People director made good use of the Theatre Collection at the N.Y. Public Library. Pollock, Compass, learned. Adapter Arthur Miller feared that Ibsen's play implied that only a few chosen people were competent to tell the world how to be civilized. But study of clippings proved that it did not imply this.

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' Digests of Current Reviews '
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Bless You All-Hellinger, 12/14/50. Weekly critics split on merits of Harold Rome-Arnold Auerbach revue. New Yorker, Newsweek and Cue appraisers thought the comedy of Jules Munshin and Mary McCarty plus the handsome scenery and sets overcame some weak material. While critics of Time, Variety and Billboard couldn't agree. Time critic thought revue looked like a tryout performance three weeks before its Broadway opening. All continued to rate top praises to Valerie Bettis' dancing numbers. Gibbs, New Yorker, found half the 19 numbers witty, but the other half just tiresome.

Guys and Dolls-46th St. Theatre, 11/24/50. Three very hard to please weekly critics loved the musical version of the Damon Runyon story. Clurman, New Republic, Brown, SRL, and George Jean Nathan join their colleagues in saluting all departments of musicals produced by Martin & Feuer. Minor criticism by Nathan filed against mediocre score. He also thought Oliver Smith, who did the sets for Bless You All, would have turned in a handsomer job than Jo Mielziner. Brown admitted he has never been a Damon Runyon fan, but he just had to rank the entire production as "grand". Clurman considered it excellent fun because it was all of one piece in spirit, substance and craft.

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' Legit Stuff '
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King Lear preview audiences recruited from New Jersey...RCA only putting up \$5,000 in Make in Make A Wish corrects Variety...Investors for Spanish Theatre Group sought via Herald Tribune ad...LIU will use guest performance for three plays this year...NBC TV planning one hour tribute to Richard Rodgers March 4...N.Y. small claims court tossed out case against Mister Roberts for refusing money refunds for seats not used during bad storm. Judge urged plaintiff to accept management's offer of seats for future performance.

